



African Population and
Health Research Center

2021 POLICY BRIEF

The case of Dakar and Ziguinchor: Similar yet Different (comparable education outcomes but distinctive SRHR indicators)

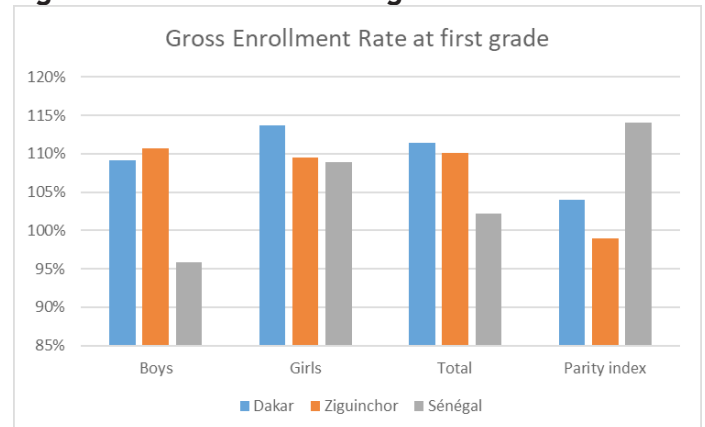
Introduction

Dakar and Ziguinchor are two regions with similar geographic -both bordered by the Atlantic ocean- and cosmopolitan character/attributes. While Ziguinchor presents other advantages from its neighboring countries such as the Republic of Gambia in the North, Republic of Guinea Bissau in the South, Dakar which is the capital of Senegal has one of the most important Atlantic seaports on the western African coast and is located between the mouths of Gambia and Senegal rivers on the southeastern side on the Cap-Vert peninsula. These physical positions present touristic assets and international access and transnational possibilities. In addition, the two regions benefited from formal education early on during colonization, putting each in a strategic position in comparison to the other regions that are still lagging behind on education outcomes. Dakar and Ziguinchor therefore present good education indicators thanks to the above mentioned assets. Although Dakar and Ziguinchor have success stories as far as education is concerned, this is not the case with their SRHR outcomes, especially for Ziguinchor. These findings were noted in the two- phase project undertaken by the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) to unearth the reasons behind the situation of education and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) in different regions of Senegal. The first phase consisted of a scoping review and its findings have been analyzed and re-checked in a second phase exploratory study. Phase 2 involved a qualitative study with key stakeholders in education and SRHR, including parents and adolescents. The review highlighted the good GAR for Dakar and Ziguinchor (see Graphic 1) (Abuya and all, 2020). These higher rates have been confirmed by the exploratory study, as being due to the existence of numerous private and Christian schools, urbanization and the presence of adequate schools and amenities in the two top regions. Dakar being the capital has many institutions that facilitate access to education, while Ziguinchor has a long tradition of formal education, placing the region at the top of all education outcomes in the country. Therefore, both regions constitute references in education. For instance, in Dakar, the GER (Gross Enrollment Rate) and GAR (Gross Achievement Rate) at the primary, middle, and secondary school show irrefutably on top of all levels of GER and GAR

for both girls and boys (DPRE, 2018-2019). its leading position after Ziguinchor which is

Figure 1 presents the Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) at the primary level in both Dakar and Ziguinchor. It shows that the two regions are beyond the national GER and Ziguinchor is on top of all the other regions. However, the parity Index in Ziguinchor is low compared to Dakar and the national rate.

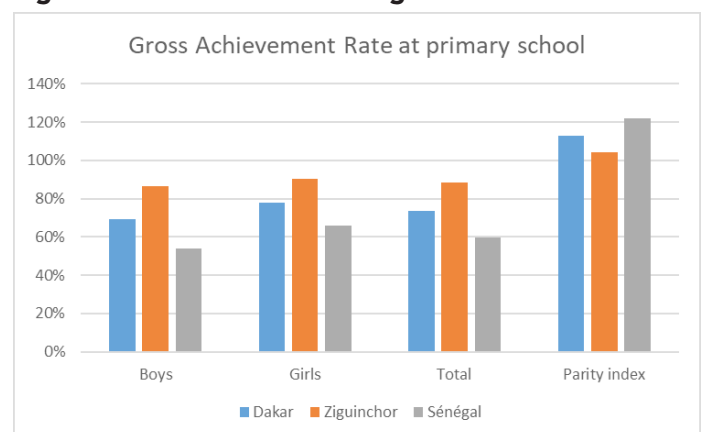
Figure 1: GER in Dakar and Ziguinchor



Source: Recensement scolaire 2018-DPRE/MEN

The Gross Achievement Rate (GAR) in the two regions at the primary level, presents high indicators compared to the national rate, except for the parity index

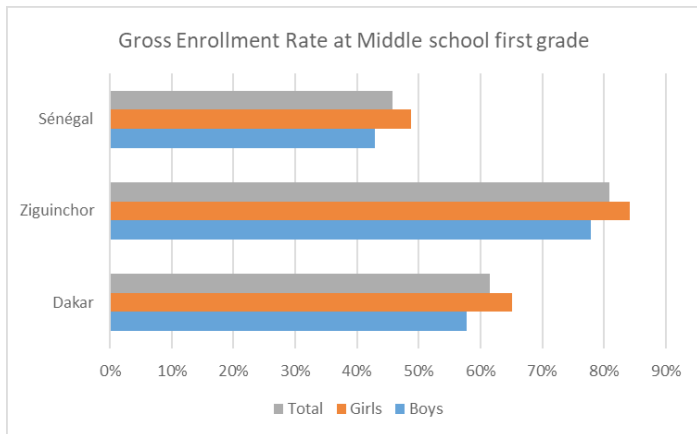
Figure 2: GAR in Dakar and Ziguinchor



Source: Recensement scolaire 2018-DPRE/MEN

At middle school, Ziguinchor still keeps the lead on girls' and boys' enrollment, followed by Dakar. Girls are predominantly present in both regions compared to boys.

Figure 3: GER at Middle school first grade



Source : Recensement scolaire 2018-DPRE/MEN

The exploratory study which takes into consideration the perspectives of key stakeholders on the two regions’ education indicators, endorses findings from the Scoping Review, and add that parents from the two regions are conscious of the importance of education for both girls and boys.

Reactions from Ministry officials and Program actors:

Ziguinchor is one of the first regions where the literacy rate is very high, and often people’s mentality in this region is a bit open. It’s a very diverse region where parents are aware of the importance of studies because many executives from Casamance and Ziguinchor have gone through school. For Dakar, it is normal- it is an urban area, and it is the capital. The phenomenon of modernization or education- and this has been the case since the colonial period- is what has led to the fact that until now there are many schools in Dakar, there are training centers, reception centers that allow young people to be able to do their studies. (KII, Program actor, Male, 15/10/2020)

For Ziguinchor, I think it’s an area with a high level of schooling, so the reasons may be because there is a cultural dimension somewhere, I think. There is also a fairly dense school map [presence of many schools] at this level, and the population has also understood the added value of schooling. For Dakar, the environment is favorable there too... As I said earlier, the level of education is coming back, the educational offer is quite diversified, and the availability of schools is quite dense in Dakar. There are all the services and all the awareness raising around education and so on. (KII, Ministry official, Female, 02/10/2020)

Lessons learned from Ziguinchor and Dakar in regards to education

- A supportive community that believes in education is critical to enrolment and retention

- The existence of good urbanization is key in support of education access
- More investment on building adequate schools (including private and Christian schools) and amenities that promote easy access
- Multiple and diverse programs are important to enhance education

However, the high indicators in education seem to hide some real problems of retention and transition despite the high access rate gained at the primary level. Across the country and in Dakar and Ziguinchor in particular, the GER tend to reduce as children move up to middle and secondary schools. For instance, in Dakar, the GER goes from 111.4% (1.4% Parity Index –PI) to 65.1% and 40.5% (with 1.17% for PI) at primary, middle and secondary school levels. This is the same for Ziguinchor where, at the primary level it is 110.1% (0.99% PI), 80.8% at the middle down to 78.0% (with 0.99% for PI) at the secondary level (DPRE, 2018). In addition, while the parity index is in favor of girls in Dakar despite its decrease across both genders and levels of education, in Ziguinchor, it remains in favor of boys all through the levels. This shows some important gaps that need to be addressed in both regions in order to improve retention and completion, in a more equitable way.

SRHR outcomes

Dakar and Ziguinchor have dissimilar realities as far as SRHR is concerned. The fact of being open to the world has brought more setbacks for Ziguinchor than for the capital city. The scoping review showed high rates of female circumcision (or Female Genital Mutilation -FGM), early pregnancy and early marriage in Ziguinchor, whereas in Dakar, the numbers remain low across all the SRH indicators thanks to exposure of the youth to and awareness on reproductive health questions, along with the numerous SRH interventions that are being implemented across the region (Abuya et al., 2020; ANSD, 2017). The exploratory study has validated these findings and established those same characteristics which have put Ziguinchor on top of its education deliverables, have presented some disadvantages to its SRHR results.

Reactions of Ministry officials and Program actors:

This is due to awareness-raising. There are adolescent centers,

partners who fight against early pregnancies in schools, which are based in Dakar. But on top of all this, information and communication is easier in these regions, particularly in Dakar. And another phenomenon which explains this low rate is that girls are practically much more aware of contraception than other girls in the regions in the interior of the country. (KII, Ministry official, Female)

In regions such as Dakar and Thiès, young people have much more access to reproductive health information than in more peripheral areas such as Ziguinchor, Sédhiou and Kolda. (KII, Program Actor, Female).

Lessons learned from Dakar on SRH

- Viable teen support systems which tends to limit incidences of early pregnancies
- Existence of NGOs and partners dedicated to fighting against all forms of violence against women
- Good and accessible communication on issues related to SRHR
- awareness of SRHR of the youth

Results from the scoping review show that regions in the South East, including Ziguinchor, have high rates of early pregnancies, early marriage and FGM. It was also noted while Dakar has 43 programs and projects on SRHR, Ziguinchor has only 23 of them, which does not seem to be sufficient nor effective for its young population. This is also partially due to the existence of certain ethnic groups that are inclined to those practices. According to GEEP & UNFPA (2019), there are high rates of early pregnancies among schoolgirls mostly in Ziguinchor (12.72%) after Thiès (13.02%) and Sédhiou (14.99%) (GEEP & UNFPA, 2019). In addition Southern regions including Sédhiou, (with 198 pregnancy cases) and Ziguinchor (with 168 pregnancy cases), have the highest rates of school pregnancy among unmarried adolescents. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Dakar (38%), Diourbel (44%) and Saint Louis (39%) have the lowest proportions of teen pregnancy among schoolgirls.

As for the issue of excision, participants highlight the presence of many ethnic groups that are prompt to maintaining their tradition of excision in Ziguinchor and at a lower degree in Dakar. Ministry officials and program actors validate the practice of excision among ethnic groups living in Ziguinchor, including the Pulars (10.5% of the population) and the Maninkas (11.10% of the population) among others (ANSD, 2013). Besides, 17.8% and 68.2% women between 15

to 49 years old, went through excision in respectively Dakar and Ziguinchor. As well the other South Eastern side including Kedougou (91.0 %), Sédhiou (75.6 %), Matam (73.3 %), Tambacounda (71.8 %) have the top rates of FGM. (ANSD 2019; ANSD, 2017).

Reasons for high SRH in Ziguinchor:

- poverty
- low reproductive health awareness
- precocity of adolescent sexuality
- tolerance of early pregnancy among some ethnic groups
- permanent contact with foreigners due to its geographic positioning and its cosmo politan
- FGM is still practiced in certain are as and among some ethnic groups in Ziguinchor.

Reactions of Ministry officials and Program actors:

It's cultural and it's the first practicing ethnicities that live in these localities, that's why the data shows that there are a lot of cases (in) these areas, there are socio-cultural practices. (KII, Ministry official, Female, 5/10/2020)

I think that there is a lack of information on sexuality, so we have to give them the right message. There are also issues of poverty. Because children are vulnerable; for (the sake of) a good snack at school, they can go beyond. If we don't prepare them psychologically, this lack of awareness could increase their vulnerability. (KII, Program Actor, Male, 7/10/2020)

What next?

The scoping review and exploratory study findings validated by stakeholders lead to the following recommendations:

- ✓ More relevant and well-funded local SRH programs in Ziguinchor with its high rates of early pregnancy and marriage:
 - o Raise awareness among parents and communities about the close interrelations between reproductive health issues and educational concerns.
 - o Additionally, the promotion of SRH is vital in closing the gap of the parity index in favor of boys at secondary level and in resolving poverty cycle

- ✓ More parental involvement in SRH initiatives. This would enable parents to break the cultural tolerance of early pregnancy while being aware of its pitfalls on girls' education, well-being and their future in general.
- ✓ More case studies (qualitative research) on reproductive health issues in Ziguinchor in order to better understand the underlying cause of the teenage pregnancies despite its good education outcomes and find tangible solutions.
- ✓ More effective application of already ratified laws against early pregnancy, child marriages and excision and for the promotion of compulsory education from age 6 to 16
 - o Implementation of good communication strategies is needed to raise awareness on those laws and their penalties while taking into consideration each communities' economic and socio-cultural realities and religious beliefs.
 - o The media could also help point out gender barriers in society and how these negatively impact girls.

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